

Subject: *Elements of Biblical Worship*

Scripture: *John 4:19-26*

This chapter describes the meeting of Jesus and a Samaritan woman and how she came to know and believe in Christ. This woman was confronted, convicted, and eventually converted. She was also confused as the place and person of worship. In our last message we learned that one specific place is not essential for worship. At the same time we learned that one specific person is essential. That one person is the one true God who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We also considered the four guidelines for acceptable worship: it should be simple, sincere, serious, and scriptural.

Hebrews 12:28 *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. One translation reads: “worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.” What are the elements of acceptable worship that we find in Scripture?*

1. Worship involves prayer

This may involve several types of prayer: silent prayer, corporate prayer, pastoral prayer, prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication (“ACTS”).

Psalms 141:2 *Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.*

Matthew 21:13 *And (Jesus) said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

2. Worship involves praise

The word “worship” has to do with giving honor to God. When we worship we are ascribing praise and glory to God. We cannot add to His glory, but we can focus our hearts and minds and voices on His glory.

Colossians 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

3. Worship involves Bible teaching

When Jesus went into the synagogue to worship, He stood before the people, took the scroll of Scripture and read from it. This was his normal practice.

Luke 4:16 *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.*

The early church met for instruction, fellowship, the Lord’s Supper, and prayer.

Acts 2:42 *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

Wherever he went Paul went to the local synagogue and taught from the Scriptures.

Acts 17:2 *And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures.*

Paul wrote to young Timothy.

1 Timothy 5:17 *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.*

2 Timothy 4:2 *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*

4. Worship involves silence and reverence

Psalms 46:10 *Be still, and know that I am God.*

One translation says, “Be silent, and know that I am God.”

Ecclesiastes 5:1-2¹ *Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.*² *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.*

5. Worship involves faith and repentance

When Isaiah saw the heavenly vision (Isaiah 6) and heard the seraphim cry out, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of hosts,” he said, “Woe is me, for I am undone.”

Worship is a time to renew our faith in God and repent of our sin before God.

6. Worship involves baptism and the Lord's Supper

This is what we find in Acts 2:42, “the breaking of bread.” Both baptism and the Lord's Supper are visual object lessons that proclaim the Gospel (Christ's death, burial, and resurrection). Without that there would be no salvation and no worship at all.

An unsaved person comes to a worship service and sees people being baptized or the Lord's Supper and he says, “I just don't get it. That doesn't do much for me.” It's not meant to do something for him. It's for God. Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me,” in other words, “Do it to honor me.”

7. Worship involves sacrifice

From the earliest days of history, worship has always involved the act of sacrifice. It began with Abel's sacrifice that was acceptable to God. Noah offered sacrifice on the altar to God. Abraham offered sacrifice on the altar to God. Old Testament priests offered sacrifices in the Tabernacle and the Temple. All sacrifices were to be offered only to the one true God.

Exodus 22:20 *He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed.*

Today we can approach God in worship only through Christ's perfect sacrifice. We no longer need blood sacrifices to approach God because Jesus laid down His life as the perfect Lamb of God. We don't need any more blood sacrifices to atone for sin. Christ's sacrifice was final and all-sufficient, and it is only through His blood that we can draw near to God.

Hebrews 9:12 *Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

Hebrews 10:19-22 ¹⁹ *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,* ²⁰ *By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;* ²¹ *And having an high priest over the house of God;* ²² *Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

But there are other sacrifices we offer to God. The Bible calls them "spiritual sacrifices."

1 Peter 2:5 *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

What are the spiritual sacrifices we offer?

- We offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving

Hebrews 13:15 *By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.*

- We offer the sacrifice of helping others

Hebrews 13:16 *But to do good and to communicate (share) forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

- We offer the sacrifice of obedience

1 Samuel 15:22 *And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*

- We offer the sacrifice of personal dedication

Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (spiritual worship).*

- We offer the sacrifice of giving

2 Corinthians 9:7 *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

These are the elements of biblical worship. These are the things God is seeking from His people. These are not things the pastor does or the music minister does, or the choir does.

We may lead in worship, but every believer should be involved in worship, and that doesn't mean to be involved as a spectator.

Worship is very specific and very personal. True worship is offered only to God and it is offered only by God's people. So the only issue is this: What does God want, expect, and deserve? The issue is not what we want, or even worse, what does the world want. The only thing that matters is what God wants and what is acceptable to Him. Worship is for an audience of ONE. God is our only attraction and God is our only audience.

Sadly, for some people worship is nothing more than a ritual. But true worship is based on a relationship with God. Worship is based on knowing God, fearing God, loving God, and praising God because He alone is worthy. Worship is our response to Him for who He is and all He has done.